

# TALES OF FO'C'S'LE AND CABIN THE ABANDONED BARK SEA GULL

THIRTY-FIVE years ago the bark Sea Gull, Joseph Rintoul, master, was found abandoned at sea under circumstances so extraordinary as to arouse the world's wonder. The mystery surrounding her has never been solved, but the story I am about to tell will reveal for the first time the unique fate which befell her master and his crew.

I am able to tell the story because I changed to know a retired sea captain living in South America—just where I am not at liberty to say. He is dead now, and his daughter told me the tale which I am about to publish. It never occurred to me that it would come out so good time, if any one is now alive who thinks it worth while to seek corroboration of this narrative.

Every man connected with the Sea Gull is dead—Capt. Rintoul was the last survivor—and the terrible wreckage that the ship's story exposes is a tragedy that can be related without prejudice to the eternal search for solutions that lives in the heart of all mankind. This much I will say, the retired sea captain in South America was Joseph Rintoul himself, and his daughter, from whom I have the tale, as an uncomprehending child saw every event I am about to relate.

But first I must give the circumstances of the Sea Gull's finding, for

of a pirate, for nothing was missing except the ship's papers and the chronometer. Various articles of jewelry belonging to the skipper's wife were found. There were also some sums of money in the cabin. The Sea Gull had evidently been abandoned by all hands on very short notice. In the sewing machine in the cabin lay a child's unfinished garment that the master's wife had been stitching. There was an unfinished meal on the cabin table. The absence of the chronometer and the ship's papers only added to the mystery. Why should they have been taken and money left behind? Another striking point was the presence of all the bark's small boats. If all hands on her had not jumped over the side they must have been taken off in the boats of some other vessel. But why?

No one could suggest a reason and from that day to this the affair has been subjected to the most elaborate and unceasing solutions. I will not recall the fantastic and far-fetched explanations invented by Sir A. Conan Doyle, whose ingenuity in the creation of Sherlock Holmes failed to serve him for the solution of this tremendous sea puzzle. Nor is there need to recount other vain efforts to work out the fate of the men of the Sea Gull. I may much better proceed to the straight record of the actual events that took place on her before she was found deserted.

To begin with, then, the Sea Gull had sailed from San Francisco four



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asked the bark's name, registry and destination. Capt. Rintoul replied that this was a British vessel bound for Havre. How long had the Sea Gull been out? One hundred and twenty-one days from San Francisco, Capt. Rintoul answered, and asked for news. The steamship had replied that she was the Ivory Trader of Antwerp bound for her home port. But as soon as she heard the Sea Gull's registry, she had turned away from and the Ivory Trader ran up a signal, which the thunderstruck Capt. Rintoul deciphered as follows:

"You are a prisoner of war."

At the same instant sailors on the deck of the steamship fired away tar-paulins and revealed a small, but shining and serious looking cannon.

Capt. Rintoul questioned in code flags. The answer came back that Great Britain was at war with France and Belgium, and had been for a month. Did the Sea Gull surrender? The master of the Sea Gull communicated these extraordinary assertions to his officers and to his wife, who stood trembling at the rail. Then he glanced about him.

His ship was absolutely motionless. The promise of a signal had dissipated and the steamship was in an ocean smooth as a millpond. It also shone on the little brass cannon that pointed directly at him from the deck of the Ivory Trader. There was no other craft in sight. Capt. Rintoul reflected. He was helpless. He could not get away without a battle, and he might be killed, his ship damaged or even possibly sink if he did not acquiesce. Through his whirling head kept running the exclamation:

"In four months a lot of things can happen ashore!"

The Ivory Trader now ran up a signal which meant: "Answer quickly."

The end, the only possible end from any point of view that considered Capt. Rintoul's responsibilities, came within a half hour. He surrendered at once, since he could not make a choice of it, and the Ivory Trader at once sent one of her boats to his bark.

The French or Belgian officer who was in charge of this boat refused to answer any questions. He insisted that every one on board the Sea Gull should be ferried over to the steamship without delay. Two trips accomplished this. Capt. Rintoul took his ship's papers to deliver up on board the steamship. The officer from the Ivory Trader watched the chronometer, saying that the steamship's own had been broken. He refused to let anything else be taken, and his men, mostly blacks, tied the hands of Capt. Rintoul's officers and men and hustled them over the side before they could reach the shore. Capt. Rintoul, in a towering rage, demanded to see the commander and learn the reason for the indignities to which his company has been subjected. He was led into the presence of a stout, greasy looking man with a face both brutal and fearless. This person, without a word, merely slightly, glanced with a sympathetic expression at Capt. Rintoul, but when he spoke his voice was extremely cold and hard:

"I am Pietie Mynhooven, in charge of the African operations of the Ivory Export Company of Antwerp, Capt. Rintoul."

"I regret to have caused you so much trouble and to have caused you to be infinitely more. You, your wife, your little girl, your officers and crew are my prisoners and must remain so until we reach the company's head station on the Congo River. After that, well, you will be the prisoners of a continent."

He smiled, and a sudden ferocity leaped into his eyes. He went on in English, which was perfect except for the habit of calling Antwerp "Antwerpen."

"You may as well understand now as later that all we have told you is lies—lies! You see, I am not afraid of the word. There is no war between your country and France and Belgium. My ship has been guilty of an act of piracy. Another sign that I am not afraid of words! I tell you with my own lips what the world would call it. But the world will never know it. We are now steaming as rapidly as possible away from the world and straight for that dark land of jungles and savagery which will never form part of the civilized world in my time or your own."

"Damn you!" shouted Capt. Rintoul, and struggled to get out of the clutch of two big African blacks who held him. It was futile. He could not get free. For Mynhooven watched his efforts until Capt. Rintoul ceased from exhaustion. Perhaps the Congo trader saw something symbolic in the way the huge blacks held this white man helpless. When Capt. Rintoul had quieted down he went on:

"The Ivory Export Company of Antwerp, of which I have the honor to be the African agent, is financed largely by men of your own nationality. It is making tremendous profits from the ivory traffic in which it has enslaved a great many of the tribes along the Congo. But we have not

enough white men to man our outposts and collecting depots on the river. I have tried to get the company to send me men, but they are a rapacious lot back home. They want to make a great fortune for each one of them without spending anything for it."

"I could double the ivory shipments if I could man these posts. I must have white men to man them, I can get them no other way than by force. If I get them I can double the trade and the increase shall belong to me, and the men with me. It shall not belong to those greedy and rapacious thieves at home who would not send me men. It shall be mine and yours and your men's!"

"See what a chance I offer you! I shall plant your crew, one or two men here, one or two men there, at the posts. All they will have to do will be to watch the ivory come down, keep track of it and hold it for our collectors. You and your wife and little girl shall have the best station of all, the one nearest mine. In a few years we shall have accumulated great riches. Then we can go our ways separately. I see now, I can provide for the marketing of the ivory and the cursed company shall have its just share—what it has been getting—and not a tusk more."

He waved his hand and Capt. Rintoul was borne away and locked up in a tiny cabin to think it over. His reflections were at first gloomy, but after a while they became calmer, for, as when the Ivory Trader pointed its gun at his bark, he was completely helpless.

In the days that elapsed while the steamship was running down the African coast, he pondered matters profoundly, but to no useful purpose. Had they sighted another ship, he would still have been helpless, for he was not allowed on deck. He saw his wife and child each day, under guard, in the cabin; they were well and were well treated, so far as confinement would permit, by two negroes, for, as when Mynhooven had brought with him.

The piratical African agent of the Ivory Trade seemed to have considered everything. In one of his interviews with Capt. Rintoul he told his prisoner:

"When I found I could not get men for our posts I determined to kidnap some. And the only way I could think of was to hold up some sailing vessel, like yours, that had been a long time at sea. A story of a war between two or more countries would serve as a ruse to take all hands prisoners. Of course, an act of piracy like that would be running a great risk. I was so happy, Captain, when I found you becalmed with no one else in sight, and happier still when I learned how long you were from port."

"It is a regret to me that I could not salvage your excellent ship, but I dared not linger even long enough to destroy her. I must run the risk of some one reading her riddle when she is found, but I hardly think the truth will be guessed."

Capt. Rintoul ground his teeth together. At length without interruption the Ivory Trader reached the mouth of that great tropical river whose banks since been well likened to a region in the very "Heart of Darkness." The steamship proceeded about fifty miles up the Congo to the head station of the Ivory Trade. There the Sea Gull's personnel was disembarked. Capt. Rintoul and his family were quartered inland at a distance of about thirty miles from the river.

At the station nearest to Mynhooven's headquarters, his notes and all the rest of the Sea Gull's hands were transported overland past certain falls and rapids and put at various tiny posts on the vast upper reaches of the river. There they were as efficient as the Ivory Trader.

I must skip an interval of several years. There is nothing in it which bears on Capt. Rintoul's story except, possibly, the atrocious thefts of the agent Mynhooven. He succeeded, as he had hoped, in doubling the ivory flow, but the profits from the excess trade all went into his own pocket. One by one reports came in of the deaths of the Sea Gull's men. Sick-ness killed five, the blacks killed seven, the fates of several are completely obscure, for when the collectors went to their posts they found them deserted and overgrown by the jungle. The apprentice boys had been kept at the head station by Mynhooven, but in a short time they all died from tropical fevers. Two of the men, put together at one remote outpost on the river, were mad and killed each other. After four years there remained alive of the whole lot of those on board the Sea Gull only Capt. Rintoul, his wife and his daughter.

It was on one day in his fourth year that the youngest child, Capt. Rintoul's son, was born. He was named after his father. On the grass in front of the head station he saw the

flow is gradually abating. The supply is running out. You have drained this region dry. There is no more ivory here to amount to much.

"No! I choose to make you reward me heavily for what I have suffered. You must give me your profits for a whole year. That will be several hundred thousand pounds sterling. You have not to wind up your company anyhow, for the traffic is abating fast. I will stay here for two years more. You must pay me a year's profit out of that big surplus you have been piling up for the last decade. Juggle the figures, cover it up any way you like. I don't care. While I remain here two years longer and send up the tusks you can reconquer yourselves a little and pay off your shareholders and prepare for a graceful exit from a dead business."

The chief from Antwerp raved excitedly, a bad thing to do in the tropics. He made himself excessively ill and then he gave in.

The thing was carried out with discreet and consummate cleverness. European shareholders in the Ivory Export Company had been given a great deal of trouble, but the day must come when the supply would dwindle so as to be no longer commercially profitable on the existing scale and in the region then worked. They received with regret but without undue surprise the notification of the approaching dissolution of the company, which had been so profitable, even yielding them as high as 55 per cent. for several years.



"I'll get some news," said Capt. Rintoul. "In four months a lot of things can happen."

brass cannon which had caused him to be taken prisoner. He had thought to the last minute for defence. Mynhooven had mounted it on the steamship for the furtherance of his piratical schemes. On the Ivory Trader's return with its white captives the brass cannon had been dismounted and left ashore. At the sight of it something came over him, a flash of a vision. He went into the head station, where there was now no white man except his captives, and shot Mynhooven dead.

With the smoking pistol in his hand Capt. Rintoul remained perfectly cool and collected. He had the barrel turned and aimed to the various blacks that he was the master. They expected him to order them to flee. He collected them and forwarded the ivory while awaiting the arrival of the head of the Ivory Export Company, who was coming down from Antwerp on the next boat.

When the chief from the home office arrived Capt. Rintoul told him everything that had happened. The chief was horrified. He threatened Capt. Rintoul. The former master of the Sea Gull remained unmoved.

"You can do nothing with me, except meet my terms," he said coldly. "If you try anything else the whole story will come out and the price committed by your shareholders, the possibility of white men as well as black, will be known. I am a man of my word, and by an irony of fate it was he that gave to the Germans the first design of a mine planting submarine. It looks almost as if his fertility of mind had been one of his own brilliantly promising engineering dreams."

Several shipments of ivory were sent down at intervals to Capt. Rintoul, who was paid for defence. Mynhooven had mounted it on the steamship for the furtherance of his piratical schemes. On the Ivory Trader's return with its white captives the brass cannon had been dismounted and left ashore. At the sight of it something came over him, a flash of a vision. He went into the head station, where there was now no white man except his captives, and shot Mynhooven dead.

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But all this time he was in a good purpose to be served. The ivory

## CHANNEL TUNNEL A WAR NECESSITY

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driven which attained a length of 2,009 yards when operations were halted on March 18, 1882. Before borings were begun, French geologists took 7,600 samples from the bottom of the channel, and by noting their composition they were able to determine the nature of the strata. They were able to establish the fact that the chalk cliffs at Dover and Sangatte were outcroppings of the geological formations underlying the waterway.

First they found a stratum of white chalk, subject to fissures and therefore porous to water. Below this, however, lay a much broader stratum of gray chalk which is impervious to water, free from flints, and easy to cut. In fact, during the driving of the tunnel through this mass, the leakage on the British side throughout the entire length of the heading did not exceed one and a half gallons per minute, and this leakage gradually diminished as the staff automatically packed itself. This is remarkable, because at that time as iron or brick lining was employed. It is because the tunnel was about half a mile long, and completed and the tunnel is in operation. To this end there will be placed cross passages or connecting tubes at regular intervals, thus linking the two main parallel tunnels. Inasmuch as the trains are to be hauled by electric

locomotives, and the problem of smoke will not exist, the engineers have designed that the movement of the trains themselves shall act somewhat like pistons to draw the air in after them and thus to stimulate the ventilation primarily induced by power fans. Another sign that I am not afraid of words! I tell you with my own lips what the world would call it. But the world will never know it. We are now steaming as rapidly as possible away from the world and straight for that dark land of jungles and savagery which will never form part of the civilized world in my time or your own."

It is proposed that the main tunnels, each having a net internal diameter of eighteen feet, and large enough to accommodate the existing rolling stock of French and British main lines.

The experts realize that they will have something of a problem to maintain efficient ventilation during the work, but plans have already been prepared in light of the best modern practice, that meet this requirement in the simplest degree. Again, ventilation must be abundant after the tunnel is completed and the tunnel is in operation. To this end there will be placed cross passages or connecting tubes at regular intervals, thus linking the two main parallel tunnels. Inasmuch as the trains are to be hauled by electric

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To facilitate building operations, there will be a third tube or drainage heading, as it is called, running parallel with the two main tubes and at a convenient point below them. This minor heading is designed to be seven feet in diameter, and during construction is to serve as a passage for the removal of "spoils." Subsequently this heading is to be a drainage line, taking any seepage that might work into the traffic tubes.

It should be of interest to us that an American engineer has also solved to link England and France by a tunnel under the English Channel, and in some particulars his project has much to commend it. Instead of driving the tubes nearly 400 feet below the surface of the water, which naturally involves long and expensive operations at the terminals, he would lay the tunnels in two sections, each about the bottom of the Channel in a wide trench excavated for the purpose. In other words, he would follow

in a general way just what was done here not long ago in extending our new subway under the Harlem River. Inasmuch as the top of this system would be only a little more than 180 feet below the surface of the Channel, the end of the tunnels would have to have a comparatively short run and also a much easier gradient than for the tubes rising from a depth of nearly 400 feet. This would mean a big saving. But another question demands an answer. How would it be possible to certainly safeguard the tunnels from submarine attack if laid in this fashion but a few feet below the water bed? Could large quantities of dynamite be dropped over the line and exploded at will?

The mine planting submarine is not merely a project; it is an accomplished fact, as England has proved by the capture of one of those craft of German construction. Might not a craft of this character, then, be employed to attack a Channel tunnel laid close to the surface and not protected by hundreds of feet of overlying water? Simon Lake, the author of this trench and Channel tunnel scheme, and by an irony of fate it was he that gave to the Germans the first design of a mine planting submarine. It looks almost as if his fertility of mind had been one of his own brilliantly promising engineering dreams."

## THE FABLE OF THE AMBITIOUS YOUNG WOMAN

By John Held



Once upon a time there was a girl who had an ambition

to make the best custard pie that could be baked.

She worked and worked until her friends thought she was foolish.

But one day along came a man who offered her \$10,000 a year

to make pies to be used in the movies. Moral: If you pick an ambition pick a winner.